TL 868

EAST TIMOR : "DISAPPEARANCES"

> "Observers believe the number of "disappearances" is very small, but no exact figures are available. (...) Reports are often unspecific and virtually impossible to confirm as the Government rarely, if ever, responds to enquiries concerning "disappearances". One international human rights group reported in March 1987 that 10 Timorese, previously believed "disappeared", were found alive."
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> ('Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1987', US State Department)

In fact, given the total blockade to which the Indonesian authorities subject the territory, militarily occupied since 1975, it is very difficult to present cases of "disappearances" in the manner usually required by UN bodies. The family of the victim is not able to lodge a complaint; neither the informant nor the organisations receiving the information can use the postal system or telephone (which are either non-existent or rigorously controlled by the military authorities) in order to obtain confirmation or further details.

In spite of these difficulties, however, it has been possible to draw up a list of 275 people about whose "disappearance" information has come out of Timor. 43 of them - including the 10 Timorese referred to in the above mentioned Country Report - were later found: all had been arrested and imprisoned. 33 had been tried and sentenced by the Dili Court, although no observer had been allowed to follow the proceedings. The remaining ten were released without trial.

The majority of the 275 "disappeared" people listed are believed to have probably been killed: Maria Gorette Leopoldo, a 17-year-old girl wrote to various people telling them she was to be executed the following day, and she probably was although the place and circumstances of her death are not known.

The list also includes 70 people who "disappeared" after being removed from different prisons in Dili (Comarca, Mes-Korem, Sang-Tai-Ho, Sat-Gas-Intel), where they were being held prisoners. They were taken away at night by Indonesian military personnel, and it is commonly said they were taken to the Areia-Branca beach or to the Tocitolu marshes and executed.

Some may still be alive and in Indonesia. The family of one "disappeared" person was shown by an Indonesian a photograph of their relative taken some years after his "disappearance". In the photograph apparently taken in Indonesia in an unspecified place, he appeared very thin and was reading. The family keeps the photograph, which they got from the Indonesian in exchange for a "tais" (Timorese woven cloth).

A PAZ É POSSÍVEL EM TIMOR-LESTE - PEACE IS POSSIBLE IN EAST TIMOR

Lisbon, July 1988